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DIES IRÆ

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1863

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DIES IRÆ

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2.

DIES IRÆ.

HAVE recently seen in the periodical press several new translations of this noble canticle — the best produced by the Middle Ages — perhaps by any age.

Among the English versions that of the Earl of Roscommon seems to have caught more of the inspiration of the original than any I have seen. It is, nevertheless, a paraphrase rather than a translation. This is a serious fault, notwithstanding its high poetic merit. A production, universally acknowledged to have no superior of its class,

should be as literally rendered as the structure of the language into which it is translated will admit. Moreover, no translation can be complete which does not conform to the original in its rhythmic quantities. The music of the Dies Iræ is as old as the hymn, if not older; and with those who are familiar with both, they are inseparably connected in thought. To satisfy the exactions of such minds, the cadences must be the same.

With full knowledge of what has been done and attempted in our language, and of the difficulty of doing better, I have nevertheless ventured on a translation having in view the two ends which I have pointed out — musical notation, and literal rendering to the extent that it is attainable.

It is the fruit of leisure moments gained from the hard service of the camp, on rebel soil, but within Union entrenchments. If, in the ages of paganism, the strings of the Lesbian lyre might be, not unworthily, swept by hands inured to arms, —

> "Qui ferox bello, tamen inter arma,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Liberum, et Musas, Veneremque, et illi
> Semper hærentem puerum canebat," —

a soldier in a Christian age may not less worthily find relief from the asperities of war in themes more congenial with the higher dispensations which he is, by the providence of God, permitted to share.

FORT ———, VA., June 17, 1863.

DIES IRÆ.

1.

DAY of vengeance, without morrow!
Earth shall end in flame and sorrow,
As from Saint and Seer we borrow.

2.

Ah! what terror is impending,
When the Judge is seen descending,
And each secret veil is rending.

3.

To the throne, the trumpet sounding,
Through the sepulchres resounding,
Summons all, with voice astounding.

DIES IRÆ.

I.

DIES iræ, dies illa!
Solvet sæclum in favillâ,
Teste David cum Sibyllâ.

II.

Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando Judex est venturus,
Cuncta strictè discussurus!

III.

Tuba, mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulcra regionum,
Coget omnes ante thronum.

4.

Death and Nature, mazed, are quaking,
When, the grave's long slumber breaking,
Man to judgment is awaking.

5.

On the written Volume's pages,
Life is shown in all its stages —
Judgment-record of past ages!

6.

Sits the Judge, the raised arraigning,
Darkest mysteries explaining,
Nothing unavenged remaining.

7.

What shall I then say, unfriended,
By no advocate attended,
When the just are scarce defended.

IV.

Mors stupebit, et natura,
Quum resurget creatura
Judicanti responsura.

V.

Liber scriptus proferetur,
In quo totum continetur,
De quo mundus judicetur.

VI.

Judex ergo quum sedebit,
Quidquid latet apparebit,
Nil inultum remanebit.

VII.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Quum vix justus sit securus?

8.

King of majesty tremendous,
By Thy saving grace defend us;
Fount of pity, safety send us!

9.

Holy Jesus, meek, forbearing,
For my sins the death-crown wearing,
Save me, in that day, despairing.

10.

Worn and weary Thou hast sought me;
By Thy cross and passion bought me;—
Spare the hope Thy labors brought me.

11.

Righteous Judge of retribution,
Give, O give me absolution
Ere the day of dissolution.

VIII.

Rex tremendæ majestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Salva me, fons pietatis!

IX.

Recordare, Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa Tuæ viæ;
Ne me perdas illâ die!

X.

Quærens me sedisti lassus,
Redemisti, crucem passus;
Tantus labor non sit cassus!

XI.

Juste Judex ultionis,
Donum fac remissionis
Ante diem rationis!

12.

As a guilty culprit groaning,
Flushed my face, my errors owning,
Hear, O God, my spirit's moaning!

13.

Thou to Mary gav'st remission,
Heard'st the dying thief's petition,
Bad'st me hope in my contrition.

14.

In my prayers no grace discerning,
Yet on me Thy favor turning,
Save my soul from endless burning!

15.

Give me, when Thy sheep confiding
Thou art from the goats dividing,
On Thy right a place abiding!

XII.

Ingemisco tanquam reus,
Culpâ rubet vultus meus :
Supplicanti parce, Deus !

XIII.

Qui Mariam absolvisti,
Et latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.

XIV.

Preces meæ non sunt dignæ,
Sed Tu bonus fac benignè,
Ne perenni cremer igne !

XV.

Inter oves locum præsta,
Et ab hædis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextrâ !

16.

When the wicked are confounded,
And by bitter flames surrounded,
Be my joyful pardon sounded!

17.

Prostrate, all my guilt discerning,
Heart as though to ashes turning;
Save, O save me from the burning!

18.

Day of weeping, when from ashes
Man shall rise mid lightning flashes,
Guilty, trembling with contrition,
Save him, Father, from perdition!

XVI.

Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis,
Voca me cum benedictis !

XVII.

Oro supplex et acclinis,
Cor contritum quasi cinis :
Gere curam mei finis !

XVIII.

Lacrymosa dies illa
Qua resurget ex favillâ
Judicandus homo reus ;
Huic ergo parce, Deus !

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